

# 2016 ELECTION LESSONS LEARNED: A MASSACHUSETTS PERSPECTIVE

IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING AND  
POST ELECTION AUDITS

# OVERVIEW

- **Background:** In 2014, the Legislature made changes to the state election laws including providing for early voting and post-election audits.
- **Early Voting:**
  - Applies only to biennial state elections
  - Either in-person or by mail
  - Available from the 11<sup>th</sup> business day preceding the general election until the close of business on the business day preceding the business day before the election
- **Post-Election Audits**
  - Applies only to presidential elections
  - Random, non-computerized drawing of 3% of precincts to be hand-counted

# EARLY VOTING

- **Early Voting Preparations**
  - Assessment of preparation of local election officials
  - Designation of early voting sites and hours
    - Using local election official office
    - Using alternate or additional locations
    - Expanded night hours and/or weekend hours
  - Delivery of early voting materials
    - Storage
  - Public Notice
    - Newspaper ads
    - Public Service Announcements
    - Website
    - Social Media

# EARLY VOTING PERIOD

- **Evaluating Adequacy of Early Voting Locations and Hours**
  - Making changes once started
    - Many needed larger spaces to accommodate number of early voters and expanded hours
  - Storage of Early Voting materials
- **Processing Early Voters**
  - Paper lists v. electronic poll books v. direct data entry into VRIS
    - Updating lists daily
  - Storing completed early voting ballots
  - Lines at early voting locations

# EARLY VOTING AND ELECTION DAY

- **Processing Early Ballots on Election Day**
  - Use of separate list for Early Voters
    - Effectiveness
  - Envelopes
  - Machine functionality with Early Voting ballots
  - Overall storage for Early Voting materials
- **Central Tabulation Facility**
  - Effectiveness
    - Compared to Non-CTF communities
  - Process at the Central Tabulation Facility
    - Staffing
      - Voter response

# EARLY VOTING RESULTS

- **22.89% voted early**
  - Carlisle had the highest EV turnout at over 45%
- **Number of Absentee Voters decreased over 2014**
- **Early voting did not increase overall participation.**
- **Voters liked the option.**
- **Cities needed more early voting locations and options**
  - Boston had lines every day at every early voting location
- **Extended hours and weekend availability are important.**
- **Processing EV ballots takes lots of time.**
- **Funding is necessary.**
- **Improvements must be made to EV processing in statewide database.**

# POST-ELECTION AUDITS

- 3% of the precincts needed to be audited (66 total)
  - **Chosen in a random, publicly verifiable, non-computerized drawing supervised by the Secretary within 48 hours after polls are closed**



# POST-ELECTION AUDITS

- **Audits began not later than 2 business days following the random drawing of precincts and had to be completed within 14 days after election day.**
- **Audit law allows for only some offices to be audited: The offices appearing on the ballot in 2016 to be audited are:**
  - President and Vice President;
  - Representative in Congress;
  - Representative in the General Court;
  - Senator in the General Court; and
  - one statewide ballot question, which will be chosen by random drawing at the time the precincts are selected described above.
- **Only the votes for the offices listed above were audited *if* more than one candidate's name was printed on the ballot.**



# POST-ELECTION AUDIT RESULTS

- **Almost every precinct had a discrepancy.**
  - No discrepancy changed the outcome of a race.
- **Even precincts that were originally hand-counted had discrepancies**
  - Best reason provided: It was a long day, we were tired. We did our best.
- **Timing was difficult.**
  - Local election officials like to schedule vacations immediately after the elections.
- **Even though it was a public process, no one, including candidates, came to watch.**

# OBSERVATIONS

- **The law that created early voting also called for a task force to study a range of election issues, including early voting.**
  - The task force shall submit its report and recommendations, together with drafts of legislation to carry its recommendations into effect, with the clerks of the house and senate on or before August 1, 2017.
- **It's likely early voting will be expanded to municipal elections.**
- **The State Auditor's Office has determined Early Voting is a local mandate, but that doesn't guarantee funding.**
- **Don't implement major changes to election laws and processes during a presidential election.**

# CONTACT

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